**A WITNESS TO THE PAST**

Bill and Genie Durland

**Submitted to the IMYM Representative Committee gathering • February 2-4, 201**

We are members of the Mountain View Monthly Meeting and have been attending IMYM since 1981. We became Quakers because of their original and authentic theological principles and practices, described as “Primitive Christianity Restored.” As Quakers evolved they described their guiding principles in what they call Testimonies of Community, Truth (now Integrity), Simplicity, Equality and Peace, and more recently Earthcare.

Bill is a member of the *ad hoc* committee formed to re-draft a proposed set of Articles of Incorporation and bylaws to be submitted to Representative Committee on February 3, 2018 replacing the more secular ones offered at the IMYM 2017 gathering. Bill appreciates the work of the *ad hoc* committee and is grateful for being included in its membership. He understood his purpose on the committee as an attorney to help improve the proposed draft. This, I believe was done in several ways. Nevertheless, Bill and Genie remain convinced that to incorporate and most likely seek 502(c)(3) status does not coincide with fundamental Quaker values and practices.

Quakers historically witnessed to political secular government and felt obligated to influence legislation on behalf of freedom of speech and exercise of religion. Their values of love of neighbor (Luke 11), equal sharing of goods (Acts 2-4), and their unique Quaker process called them to look to God rather than government for their safety and security. They rejected the privileges and powers that governments offered and the accompanying obligations that were attached to them. They recognized, early on, that the agreement to become a governmental corporation ran counter to what it meant to be a Quaker. They learned this through many tribulations and persecutions arising from governmental efforts to thwart their witness.

There are examples too numerous to name illustrating this consistent position. Their “Holy Experiment” as political representatives of Pennsylvania ended as it became subject to political requirements in order to continue to hold their spiritual characteristics of governance. (Compare these political manipulations to governmental examples in the Trump administration, such as trade-offs of a $25 dollar wall for DACA.) They rejected slavery and the power over other human beings that it offered. As a predominantly white church, they nevertheless aided their neighbors of color who were victims of segregation, discrimination, racism, sexism and immigration abuses, risking their status resulting in the AFSC at one time being listed as a terrorist organization. Their conscientious objectors and civilly disobedients were well known, as was their rejection of violence in all forms, including war making, capital punishment, gun violence and inequality of rich and poor. For hundreds of years and in almost all cases to the present day, this witness was guaranteed by their allegiance to their Testimonies and their unique aspects of democracy exhibited in their Quaker process. (For a more detailed explanation of the reasons to reject incorporation, see Bill’s paper “On Quakers and Corporations” readily available to Quakers and partially published in *Western Friend,* July/Aug. 2013).

We are called, as witnesses to the past, to be witnesses in the present. The powers and privileges, as well as the requirements that are attached to become incorporated, and eventually take on 501(c)(3) status, are not in conformity with the historic and authentic Quaker community witness over the centuries. These are the reasons we cannot join in support of an action that for us would be hypocritical and directly at odds with all that we practice as Quakers. It should be emphasized that these reasons not to incorporate as a governmental entity are more important than ever as we already suffer under a government that rejects democracy, and thus our Testimonies, through its racist and sexist practices. We are also called to stand aside and allow those in unity to proceed for otherwise to exercise over them a type of veto preventing their freedom would simply place us in complicity with a government which presently practices a veto over the will of the people. We will hold in the Light those who wish to place our spiritual meeting under the guidance of the national government.